

Examination of the Harborough Local Plan 2020-2041

Stage 2 Matters, Issues and Questions (MIQs)

Written Statement by Harborough District Council

MATTER 4: Creating Jobs and Diversifying the Economy

Whether the Plan is justified, effective and consistent with national policy in relation to Creating Jobs and Diversifying the Economy?

Policies DS02, AP02, DM13, SA01: MH6, MH7, MH8, L3, K2, MP1 and MP2, SA02 Appendix 6, SA03 (Appendix 6)

Matter 4, Issue 1: Employment uses: excluding strategic warehousing

The Council's response:

Matter 4, Issue 1, Question 1

Q1: What is the robust justification for a plan requirement of 60 ha of employment land, excluding strategic warehousing, over the Plan period?

1. The requirement for 60 ha of employment land to meet local needs is derived from the Local Housing & Employment Land Evidence Report ([EMP-NLP 5](#)). The analysis in Section 10 therein updates that in the 2022 HENA to capture more recent completions data and relate to the plan period.
2. The need for office and R&D space is set out in Table 10.4 and constitutes 9.6 ha. This is derived from the HENA Growth Scenario for employment growth in relevant sectors, with adjustments to provide flexibility and support churn and choice.
3. The need for local industrial development (which is not strategic warehousing) is based on a projection of 10-year gross completions trends as a starting point, with adjustments then made in response to market signals reflecting evidence of a low vacancy rate within industrial stock < 9000 sq.m; as well as provide flexibility and a choice of sites. The report recognises in doing so that industrial floorspace needs (such as by type, size or location) can vary as

between different businesses. This is brought together in Table 10.6 which identifies a local industrial need for 50.6 ha.

4. These two components are brought together in identifying the requirement for 60 ha over the plan period.

Matter 4, Issue 1, Question 2

Q2: Is there any potential for lack of clarity when reading criterion 2 of Policy DS02? This sets out an overarching policy for employment uses other than strategic warehousing. However, the individual allocations are prescriptive and precise referring to specific employment uses within the Use Classes Order (those falling within Class E (g) (i) (ii) and (iii), B2, and B8 restricted to small warehousing)?

5. No. The introduction to the Plan (Para 1.20) is clear all policies need to be considered and that several policies may be relevant to a proposed development or its location.
6. Policy DS02 is one of five policies comprising the spatial strategy to meet development needs. The policy addresses the overall need for employment covering the range employment uses forecast by relevant evidence ([HSG-NLP 3 HENA 2022](#), [EMP-NLP 5 Harborough Local Housing and Employment Land Evidence 2025](#)) and setting out the scale of growth at different locations based on the settlement hierarchy. In providing a practical guide to navigating the plan Para 1.20 clearly states Chapter 4 should be used to determine if a proposal aligns to the overall strategy for development.
7. Policy SA01: Site Allocations relates to individual sites that are allocated for a specific use and scale of development to enable the delivery of Policy DS02. The policy requirements of SA01 are specific to each site and are necessarily more prescriptive and precise, referring to specific uses within the Use Classes Order, informed by the individual site characteristics. Not all employment use classes are appropriate for every site allocation.
8. Policies DS02 and SA01, providing the site-specific uses, need to be read together and provide clarity on how much employment development is planned and which use classes are supported on each site. However, if the panel consider further clarity is required a Main Modification could be

prepared to add in a reference to the relevant site-specific policies into Policy DS02.

Matter 4, Issue 1, Question 3

Q3: Policy SA02: Land South of Gartree Road Strategic Development Area includes the allocation of land for 5 ha of general employment land. This is the only significant new allocation within the Plan for employment, other than for strategic warehousing. Is the Plan effective as its location within the wider site is to be established as part of the master planning process, rather than defined on the policies map? How will this impact on the delivery of the employment land within the Plan period?

9. The plan is effective. The policies map identifies the extent of the Land South of Gartree Road Strategic Development Area (SDA) allocation. LSGR is a strategic site expected to deliver within and beyond the plan period. Not defining the 5 Ha of employment land within the allocation boundary, allows flexibility for its location to be determined as an integral part of the masterplanning process.
10. Policy SA02 criterion 4 states the masterplan must meet the requirements of Appendix 6 (Masterplanning Requirements) and include b) Provision of 5 hectares of new general employment land within Harborough district. Appendix 6 criteria 3 and 12 require masterplans to; set out the spatial framework and indicative layout with key parameters including the quantum of development, in this case as per Policy SA02 criteria 4, and include a phasing and implementation plan. Appendix 6 also demands the scope and form of the masterplan and its relationship to the development management process be agreed at the pre-application stage.
11. In combination these elements of the Plan are effective, they outline the requirement that employment land is necessary to create a sustainable community and successful place and require its location and phasing be agreed at the pre-application stage. Not defining the 5 ha on the policies map is not considered likely to impact delivery within the plan period. Wider economic circumstances and market conditions will be the key drivers of delivery.
12. The wording of policy SA02 has not constrained the ability of the developers to progress masterplanning for the site and an outline planning application for this allocation was submitted in September 2026.

Matter 4, Issue 1, Question 4

Q4: Offices are defined within the NPPF as a main town centre use. As submitted the Plan would allow unrestricted office uses at Land South of Gartree Road Strategic Development Areas. Is it consistent with NPPF paragraph 90 that office development be located outside a defined town centre?

13. The Plan does not prescribe or restrict the proportion of different use classes for the 5 ha employment land allocation at Land South of Gartree Road. The approach provides flexibility to enable this element of the place to be shaped as part of the place-making and masterplanning process. It also allows provision to reflect the district employment land supply / demand balance and respond to market conditions at the time of delivery. Proposed Main Modification 13.5 sets out the Plan's expectations for this employment allocation, to deliver one or more employment areas to accommodate a mix of employment uses to meet district need.
14. Offices are a main town centre use. Policy DS02 criterion 11 defines a network of centres and directs main town centre uses to defined centres, in line with their position in the Harborough Retail Hierarchy. Local Centres are at the bottom of the hierarchy; the Land South of Gartree Road SDA centre is identified as a Local Centre. Policy DS02 criterion 6 reinforces the strategy to focus major office development in existing centres as identified in criterion 11. In addition, Policy AP02 supports development for main town centres uses where its scale and design reflect the size, role and function of the centre.
15. The definition of the LSGR SDA centre as a Local Centre, makes office uses appropriate for this location, consistent with NPPF paragraph 90. The relative position of the centre in the hierarchy and policies DS02 and AP02 mitigate against unrestricted office uses in this location.

Matter 4, Issue 1, Question 5

Q5. For the following sites: MH5, MH6, L3 and K2 please answer the following questions. The Council should address any site-specific concerns raised in representations.

- i) What is the scale, and type/mix of uses proposed? Are they clear? Please confirm that the description of use set out in the policy corresponds to the Use Class reference?
 - ii) What is the basis for this mix, and is it justified?
 - iii) What is the current planning status of the site in terms of allocation in the adopted plan, planning applications, planning permissions and construction?
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- iv) What are the benefits that the proposed development would bring?
 - v) How does the site relate to nearby uses? What is the potential adverse impact of developing the site, for example in terms of transport/traffic, pollution, nature conservation, landscape and impact on heritage assets? How have these been considered and how could they be mitigated?
 - vi) How is the site affected by flood risk? How has this been taken into account in allocating the site? How have the sequential and, if necessary, exception tests been applied?
 - vii) How have the wider transport implications of the proposed development been considered?
 - viii) What are the infrastructure requirements/costs? How would these be addressed and are they directly related to, necessary and fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development? Are there physical or other constraints to development?
 - ix) Is the site available, realistically viable and deliverable? Does the site fall within a Mineral Safeguarding Area, if so, how would this impact on the site's deliverability?
 - x) Is the boundary of the site appropriate? Is there any justification for amending the boundary, where appropriate?
 - xi) Are there any MMs required for the Plan to be found sound?

Council Response:

16. To avoid duplication please refer to the Councils Matter 7 Statement for responses to the above questions i)-xi) in respect of allocations MH5, MH6, L3 and K2.

Matter 4, Issue 2: Employment uses: strategic warehousing

Questions:

The Council's response:

Matter 4, Issue 2, Question 1

Q1. What is the justification for differentiating between strategic (greater than 9,000 square metres (sqm) and non-strategic warehousing (less than 9,000 sqm)?

17. There are two core reasons: firstly, the market geography for 'big box' logistics/warehousing units stretches beyond the local authority boundaries, with the district falling in the logistics 'Golden Triangle' which sits at the centre of the country and from which the major population centres are within a 4.5 hr drive time (see [TPC-NLP 6](#) Strategic B8 Topic Paper Section 4). Secondly, there are specific locational requirements for strategic (big box) warehousing, in terms of location and proximity to junctions on the strategic road network, separation from sensitive uses, access from SRFIs, labour access etc (see for instance Strategic Distribution Floorspace Needs Update and Apportionment Report [EMP-NLP 6](#) Table 6.4 or B8 Needs Sensitivity Report Section 7).
18. The distinct locational requirements of the logistics sector are recognised in the PPG in Para 2a-031-20190722, which emphasises the need for collaborative working between LPAs to assess needs and then consider appropriate locations for meeting these needs. The approach adopted by the L&L authorities is consistent with this, culminating in the SoCG on Strategic Warehousing Needs ([SCG-NLP 23](#)) which addresses the apportionment of needs for strategic warehousing units > 9,000 sq.m.

Matter 4, Issue 2, Question 2

Q2. Our understanding is that the wider area forms part of a 'Golden Triangle' which has peculiarly good access to the national road network, as well as rail freight, and thereby to customers. How has the location of large-scale strategic warehousing been considered in the context of the wider 'Golden Triangle' and the cumulative impact of existing and as yet unimplemented permitted strategic warehousing at Daventry International Freight Terminal (DIRFT,) Rugby Gateway and within the A426 corridor?

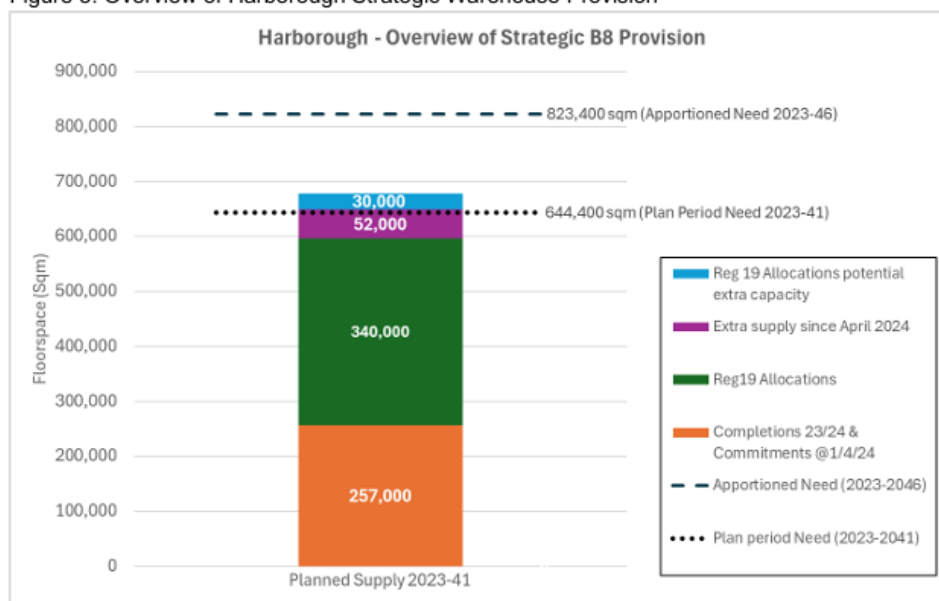
19. The principal collaborative working to consider the locations for large-scale strategic warehousing has been at a Leicester and Leicestershire level, which has included the preparation of the joint evidence base on need ([EMP-NLP 1](#) and [EMP-NLP 6](#)) and the joint work to apportion these needs to identified Areas of Opportunity (EMP-NLP6). Similar work has been undertaken for neighbouring areas, including Coventry and Warwickshire (within the wider West Midlands context) and the south east Midlands area, including Northamptonshire.
20. For Leicestershire, the evidence base indicates a residual need for over 3 million sqm of additional floorspace over and above existing commitments (EMP-NLP6 Table 0.1). Similarly in Warwickshire, there is a clear identified need for additional allocations to meet strategic warehousing needs arising from the evidence base covering Coventry & Warwickshire and other parts of the West Midlands, with the draft Rugby Local Plan similarly proposing additional strategic allocations to meet these needs.
21. In West Northamptonshire, the 2025 HENA for that area has similarly considered needs for big box industrial and logistics development and identifies a residual shortfall of between 177- 294 ha of land. This takes account of outstanding commitments and allocations including DIRFT3.
22. Across all of these areas, the latest evidence therefore points to need for local plans to identify further allocations to meet strategic warehousing needs in addition to existing commitments to meet identified development needs.

Matter 4, Issue 2, Question 3

Q3. How does the quantum of proposed development relate to the Leicester and Leicestershire Authorities Statement of Common Ground relating to Strategic Warehousing Need, March 2026 [SCG-NLP26]?

23. The quantum of proposed development identified in the Plan (340,000sqm) relates to the Leicester and Leicestershire Authorities Statement of Common Ground relating to Strategic Warehousing Need, March 2026 [[SCG-NLP 23](#)], as set out in para 9.8-9.9 of the 'Implications of new evidence' section of [TPC-NLP 6: Strategic Warehousing Topic Paper \(March 2026\)](#). The SoCG covers a longer 23-year period to 2046, whereas the Draft Harborough Local Plan covers a shorter 18-year period to 2041.
24. Table 2 of the SoCG apportions 823,400sqm to Harborough district for 2023-2046 (i.e. 23 years). After taking account of completions and commitments (totalling 257,000sqm) the residual need to 2046 is stated as 566,400sqm.
25. As indicated in para 9.8 of the Topic Paper (TPC-NLP 6) the pro-rata apportionment figure for the shorter Harborough local plan period (2023-2041 is 644,400sqm (i.e. 18 years). After taking account of completions and commitments (totalling 257,000sqm) this leaves a residual of 387,400sqm to plan for to 2041.
26. The 340,000sqm of development identified in the Plan relates to, and would contribute towards, meeting the pro-rata residual need to 2041 of 387,400sqm. As detailed in para 9.9 of the Topic Paper (TPC-NLP6) there is sufficient land supply in the district to accommodate the (pro-rata) apportioned need up to c mid-2039. Proportionally the shortfall to 2041 is small, equivalent to c.1.3yrs, and it has potential to be addressed in full through extra supply flexibility as illustrated in Figure 5 of TPC-NLP 6 (below). The Draft Local Plan period is to 2041 therefore the plan does not consider need beyond 2041.

Figure 5: Overview of Harborough Strategic Warehouse Provision



Matter 4, Issue 2, Question 4

Q4. What are the locational requirements for strategic warehousing? Is there any synergy to be derived from extending Magna Park? Is the quantum of strategic warehousing (340,000 sqm) which has been planned within the District justified?

27. The locational requirements are set out in Strategic B8 Needs Sensitivity Report ([EMP-NLP 4](#)) in Section 7 and include a minimum site size of 10 ha (where extending existing sites) or 25 ha (for standalone new sites), and strong accessibility to the Strategic Road Network (SRN). Wider locational considerations include junction capacity; public transport accessibility; proximity to SRFIs; and labour accessibility. These factors informed the assessment of potential candidate sites in the Appendix to EMP-NLP4.
28. Given the geography of the district, the western part of the District around Lutterworth is the only area with direct access to the SRN (TCP-NLP6 Topic Paper Para 8.13).
29. The latest evidence on needs is set out in the L&L Strategic Distribution Floorspace Needs Update and Apportionment ([EMP-NLP 6](#)). This followed the approach envisaged in the PPG and included an updated assessment of needs triangulating different forecasting models – traffic growth and replacement demand, gross completions, and net absorption with adjustments for suppressed demand. It concluded in identifying a need for 3,059,200 sqm

of floorspace to 2046. The Study then went on to consider the apportionment of need, recommending provision of 823,400 sqm of additional land was provided in Area of Opportunity 6 (M1 South) to 2046 ("QA"). It is this OA which falls within Harborough District (Table 0.6). The need and apportionment to Districts / Boroughs was then agreed in the Strategic B8 SoCG in March 2026 ([SCG-NLP 23](#)).

30. The quantum planned for in the Plan is addressed in the Strategic B8 Topic Paper ([TPC-NLP 6](#)). The Plan makes provision for a total of 597,000 sqm of strategic B8 floorspace, comprising completions in 2023/24 and commitments at April 2024 (totalling 257,000 sqm) together with the proposed allocations (MP1 and MP2) which provide 340,000 sqm.
31. This quantum falls slightly below the apportionment to Area of Opportunity 6 (AO6) set out in EMP-NLP6, which when prorated for the plan period is 644,000 sqm. As the Strategic B8 Topic Paper sets out, this is sufficient to meet needs apportioned to the district until mid-2039 (TPC-NLP6 Para 6.11). As the Topic Paper sets out, there is potential extra capacity on allocations MP1 and MP2 (+30,000 sqm) and extra supply granted since April 2024, closing the gap.
32. There are synergies from extending Magna Park as set out in the Strategic B8 Topic Paper (TCP-NLP6) in Section 8. It makes efficient use of existing connections to the SRN; is already accessible by sustainable modes of travel including walking, cycling and existing public transport serving the Magna Park Estate, and thus makes best use of existing transport infrastructure and offers opportunities for potential improvement including for travel by sustainable modes. The site also includes the Centre for Logistics, Education and Research (CLEAR), a dedicated onsite training hub.

Matter 4, Issue 2, Question 5

Q5. What highway impacts are forecast within Harborough District and beyond, and would this result in either an unacceptable impact on highway safety or severe residual cumulative impacts on the highway network?

33. The Council's response to Matter 10, Issue 1, Policy DM06, Question 11, para 110 -114 explains the position regarding the SRN. Within the JTE Stage 2 report it was recognised that there are pre-existing issues on the SRN (including at Gibbet Roundabout) that would require significant investment,

therefore proposed mitigation focused on addressing impacts from new local plan growth that were proportionate in scale.

34. The transport evidence does not include mitigation on the SRN following the consistent advice of National Highways. This position has been agreed with National Highways (and recorded in the SoCG [SCG-NLP25](#)). National Highways are aware of the impacts on the SRN and have no concerns with transport evidence which they have agreed is proportionate to plan-making. If NH considered there were unacceptable impacts on highway safety or severe residual cumulative impacts on the SRN as a result of local plan growth, then it would have been recorded in the latest Statement of Common Ground [\[SCG-NLP25\]](#)
35. The transport evidence does not include mitigation on the SRN following the consistent advice of National Highways. This position has been agreed with National Highways (and recorded in the SoCG [SCG-NLP25](#)). The assessment in the Joint Transport Evidence (JTE) does not therefore rely on unidentified strategic highway improvements in order to reach its conclusions.
36. As a result, the forecast effects on the Local Road Network (LRN) should reasonably be understood as representing a robust worst-case scenario. This provides a cautious basis for assessment and ensures that the Plan has not been progressed on the basis of speculative or uncommitted SRN interventions. The LRN impacts and mitigation package is set out in the Preliminary Scheme Design (Local Highway) report [\[HDC13\]](#). This shows that impacts of local plan growth can be mitigated to an acceptable degree. These improvements are identified in the updated IDP [\[HDC 11A\]](#) as integral to the delivery of the plan, and the updated whole plan viability assessment [\[HDC 12\]](#) indicates these schemes are viable.

6. Matter 4, Issue 2, Question 6

Q6. Given the existing capacity constraints on the A5³, which would require considerable investment to mitigate, is it consistent with national policy to bring forward additional strategic warehousing at a location which is solely dependent on the road network? If so, what certainty is there that such improvements would be forthcoming over the Plan period? When would they be complete and would additional warehousing over that which has been permitted or vacant be developable over the Plan period?

37. The Strategic Distribution Floorspace Needs Update ([EMP-NLP 6](#)) has considered broad locations which could potentially accommodate strategic

warehousing development across Leicestershire. It finds very limited locations where there are not some junction capacity constraints or potential requirements for strategic investment (see for instance Table 6.5).

38. These factors fed into the apportionment of need and advice on phasing therein (Para 7.34) and included input from engagement with the highway's authorities, and consideration of the potential for additional rail-served supply; with the apportionment considering the potential for expansion of rail-served supply in Leicestershire and considering the proximity to SRFIs. The potential expansion of rail-served supply is thus already considered in the needs evidence. There are no options for rail served provision within the apportioned need to AO6/ Harborough District.
39. The Council's response to Matter 10, Issue 1, Policy DM06, Question 11, para 110 -114 explains the position regarding SRN mitigation on the A5. The transport evidence does not include mitigation on the SRN following the consistent advice of National Highways. This position has been agreed with National Highways (and recorded in the SoCG [SCG-NLP25](#)).
40. The assessment does not therefore rely on unidentified strategic highway improvements in order to reach its conclusions. As a result, the forecast effects on the Local Road Network (LRN) should reasonably be understood as representing a robust worst-case scenario. This provides a cautious basis for assessment and ensures that the Plan has not been progressed on the basis of speculative or uncommitted SRN interventions. The LRN mitigation package is identified in Appendix C of the Preliminary Scheme Design (Local Highway) report [\[HDC13\]](#). These improvements are identified in the updated IDP [\[HDC 11A\]](#) as integral to the delivery of the plan, and the updated whole plan viability assessment [\[HDC 12\]](#) indicates these schemes are viable.
41. On this basis, additional warehousing in the form of site allocations MP1 and MP2 totalling additional development of 340,000sqm, is developable over the plan period.

Matter 4, Issue 3: Access to Jobs and Training

Question:

The Council's response

Matter 4, Issue 3, Question 1

Q1. Is criterion 9 of policy DS02 consistent with NPPF paragraph 57?

42. NPPF paragraph 57 states that planning obligations must only be sought where they meet all three tests, set out in Regulation 122 (2) of the CIL Regulations 2010. Local workforce support can be sought through planning obligations.
43. However, in its current form Criterion 9 of Policy DS02 is inconsistent with NPPF paragraph 57 because it requires a) the applicant to demonstrate how access to jobs for residents will be increased, and b) a financial contribution towards training provision, and neither may in every case be necessary to make development acceptable in planning terms.
44. To maintain the intent of criteria 9, to enable residents to benefit from jobs and training arising from new large-scale development, and resolve consistency with NPPF paragraph 57, it is considered that criterion 9 could be more clearly worded to encourage rather than require. To remove any inconsistency, the Council would be happy to accept a recommendation for a modification on this basis.

Matter 4, Issue 4: Existing Employment

The Council's response

Matter 4, Issue 4, Question 1

Q1. Does the Plan provide sufficient opportunities for the expansion of existing economic sites and premises within the designated employment areas and the flexibility to respond to changes in demand and economic circumstances where appropriate, consistent with NPPF paragraphs 85 and 86? What is the significance to the policies of the Plan of the changes to the Use Classes Order which came into effect on 1 September 2020?

45. Yes, the plan provides sufficient opportunities in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt in line with NPPF para 85 and 86, as summarised in para 2.3.23 of [TPC-NLP 5 Employment and Retail Topic Paper](#).
46. Designated employment areas in the district have been reviewed as part of the plan preparation process including considering the potential to accommodate or intensify development, findings are presented in [EMP-NLP 5: Harborough Local Housing & Employment Land Evidence \(Feb 2025\)](#). Most designated employment areas are located within settlements, are tightly bounded by built development and have no or limited scope for expansion.
47. However, the Plan contains policies that allocate sites (SA01), policies which provide opportunities for designated Key and General Employment Areas to evolve with business requirements (DS02), and area-based policies (AP01-AP03) that provide additional flexibility for further business development not anticipated in the plan within settlements and in the countryside in defined circumstances.
48. The assessment of Harborough's future employment land needs also includes a margin for flexibility and market choice and an adjustment to raise the industrial vacancy level, as referenced in chapter 10 of [EMP-NLP 5](#). Land supply also exceeds the identified quantitative need to address use flexibility and ensure delivery against need across all employment uses.
49. The changes to the Use Classes Order came into effect on 1 September 2020, prior to the start of the preparation process for the submitted plan and have no significance to the assessment of Harborough employment land need and limited significance to the policies of the plan. The changes revoked B1 Business use [B1(a) Offices, B1(b) Research and development, B1(c) Industrial processes] and effectively replaced the use class with the new Class E(g) [E(g)(i) Offices, E(g)(ii) Research and development, E(g)(iii) Industrial processes]. Collectively E(g) uses, and the revoked B1 uses before it, are

commonly referred to as business uses. Policies DS02, SA01 and DM13 refer to specific use classes as appropriate in each case.

Matter 4, Issue 4, Question 2

Q2. Is the approach to the protection of the designated employment areas in policy DS02, effective and justified? How were the designated areas' boundaries defined, and a differentiation made between Key Employment and General Employment Areas?

50. Yes. The policy approach in DS02 is informed by the evidence in the Local Housing and Employment Land Evidence ([EMP-NLP 5](#)) which included review of existing employment areas and extant allocations (Appendix A). This reviewed whether designated employment areas were fit for purpose in meeting business needs; whether extant allocations should be retained; and how sites should be treated. It included a review of site boundaries and was informed by site assessments undertaken in Spring 2024, engagement with local agents and site developers and review of the pattern of supply and losses, as per the PPG.
51. Site boundaries are set out in the adopted Local Plan, but were reviewed as part of this process, with amendments made where appropriate to reflect the analysis of sites and position on the ground. The recommended adjustments to boundaries are set out in EMP-NLP5 in Table 1.9.
52. As set out in Para 4.27 in the Plan, Key Employment Areas are employment areas of the highest quality and most important, by virtue of scale, type or location; provide a variety of fit-for-purpose premises and are particularly important to the district's economy. General employment areas are defined as GEAs are defined as generally fit for purpose for business use, but which may benefit from upgrade or renewal to continue to be attractive to the market and achieve high levels of occupancy. The designations for individual sites were reviewed within EMP-NLP5, which recommended which sites should fall within each category in Table 11.2 and Paras 11.30-11.31.

Matter 4, Issue 4, Question 3

Q3. Does policy DM13 provide an appropriate planning framework for employment development outside of the designated Employment Areas? Is the policy, and in particular the use of terminology such as ‘business/commercial/industrial purposes’, sufficiently clear to decision-makers, developers and local communities, how development will be dealt with? Is the policy approach to development set out consistently in a positive manner?

53. Yes, Policy DM13 provides an appropriate planning framework for employment development on existing sites and premises outside of designated Employment (Key and General) Areas and on the specific named sites. Criteria 1 and 2 of the policy seek to avoid the unnecessary loss of existing non-safeguarded employment sites / premises, except in circumstances where the applicant can provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate employment uses are no longer viable. Criteria 3,4,5 and 6 seek to manage employment development at established sites in unsustainable locations. The purpose and origin of these policies is set out in para 2.3.27-2.3.28 of [TPC-NLP 5](#).
54. Read together, the terminology of DM13 criteria 1 and 2 is clear to decision-takers, developers and local communities how development would be dealt with. The wording in criterion 2 of DM13 is negative, and so the approach across all criteria is not consistently positive. It is considered that the criteria could be more positively and clearly worded. To ensure a consistent positive manner, the council would be happy to accept a recommendation for a modification on this basis.

Matter 4, Issue 4, Question 4

Q4. What is the planning status of Bruntingthorpe Proving Ground and is it appropriate to defer within policy text to existing authorised uses, noise management plans and unilateral undertakings, as well as binding a policy to subsequent legal agreements or plans?

55. Bruntingthorpe Proving Ground is a former airfield which has been used as a vehicle proving ground since the early 1970's. The site is not a designated Employment Area.
56. As outlined in paragraph 2.3.28 [TPC-NLP 5](#) this is one of 3 specific commercial sites in rural locations within the district, where balancing change with the protection of the countryside is key.

57. The site has had a long history of enforcement action, concerning unauthorised planning uses and their impact, which culminated in the agreement of the Unilateral Undertaking (2009) and associated Operational Plan and Noise Management Plan. The Unilateral Undertaking is a legally binding commitment between the landowner and HDC, that runs with the land and binds future owners of the site.
58. Policy DM13 criterion 3 is essentially carried forward from the adopted Local Plan which was subject to Examination. The wording is unchanged except for the addition of “or any subsequent legal agreement or plan” included in b) to future-proof the policy in the event the UU and associated plans are superseded. On this basis, and its proven effectiveness, the approach of the policy is considered appropriate.

Matter 4, Issue 4, Question 5

Q5. What is the justification for restricting Class B8 uses to units of less than 500 sq m at the Bruntingthorpe Industrial Estate and the complex North of Gartree Road? Why does criterion 6 of the policy relate to the re-use of buildings, yet criterion 4 of the policy does not?

59. Policy DM13 criterion 4 and 6 are carried forward from the adopted Local Plan and have been effectively used in decision-making. The unit size limit reflects the existing scale of buildings and is a policy tool to manage adverse impacts and restrict HGV traffic generation associated with development of the sites. Site access through narrow rural roads is a key factor affecting potential development, with neither location considered sustainable, accessible or attractive to meet future employment need. The upper limit of 500 sqm reflects the constraints affecting the Estate.
60. As outlined in paragraph 2.3.28 [TPC-NLP 5](#) these are two of 3 established commercial sites in rural locations within the district, where balancing change with the protection of the countryside is key.
61. Criterion 6 differs from criterion 4 in relating to the re-use of buildings because there are limited buildings in E(g) / B Class uses at the complex North of Gartree Road.

Matter 4, Issue 4, Question 6

Q6. Criterion 5 relates to Leicester Airport. In the interests of soundness should this element of the policy be included within the transport policies of the Plan? Does the policy itself, provide sufficient clarity were any application for the intensification of the site to come forward for aviation uses?

62. No. The positioning of DM13 criterion 5 within the plan is not considered a matter of soundness. The Plan is not structured by topic and transport policies feature in different parts of the Plan. The airport is not allocated by the plan (Policy SA01), and the plan does not identify it as strategic infrastructure (DS05).
63. Criterion 5 of DM13 concerns Leicester Airport, an aviation airfield, and sits within Part 2: Design of Developments and Management of Impacts (Development Management Policies) concerned with ensuring our standards for design are met and the impacts of individual developments are managed appropriately. DM13 is concerned with the retention and redevelopment of existing business uses and essentially manages development at sites which exist as exceptions to the type of commercial / non-residential development supported in the countryside, therefore criterion 5 is most appropriately within Policy DM13 in Part 2 of the plan.
64. Yes, the policy is carried forward from the adopted local plan and provides sufficient clarity. The policy responds to paragraph 110 f) of the NPPF enabling the airport to adapt and change over time. Were an application for the intensification of aviation uses to come forward, it would be considered against criterion 5, sub-criteria a) or b) and other relevant Development Management policies of the Plan which provide additional clarity on the requirements for the design of a development and mitigation of its impacts.

Matter 4, Issue 4, Question 7

Q7. Our understanding is that there are significant employment commitments within the extant local plan. How do these impact on the strategy of the submitted Plan and what would be the policy framework under which any development would be considered?

65. The extant Local Plan identified eight allocations for employment uses, excluding strategic warehousing. All these sites are reviewed in [EMP-NLP 5 Appendix A](#), the review found that the extant allocations remain deliverable and should continue to form part of the employment land supply.
66. On this basis, those sites (or parts of) which were unconsented at 31/3/23 were proposed as allocations in the Draft Local Plan at Regulation 19, namely; Compass Business Park (MH6), Land South of Lutterworth Road/Coventry Road (L3), and Land adjacent to Priory Business Park (K2). These sites including their current planning status are covered in the response to Matter 4, Issue 1 Question 5.
67. Sites, including extant allocations, which had extant consent at 31/3/23 were treated as commitments and factored into the supply of land to enable the residual need to be identified. The largest of these is (L1) Lutterworth East SDA, comprising 2 sites totalling 21.5ha. In addition, due to the significant scale of extant allocations (MH4) Land at Airfield Farm 13Ha and (MH5) Airfield Business Park 3.8Ha and the timing of consent being granted for these sites (after the end of the 2022/23 monitoring year and during the preparation of EMP-NLP 5), both were included as commitments and factored into the supply of employment land. These sites are in Market Harborough and Lutterworth, the districts tier 2 market towns, where much of the district's employment provision is focused. Consequently, these three commitments are a significant element of the strategy of the submitted plan.
68. A full list of employment commitments at 31/3/25 is presented as Appendix B of [TPC-NLP 5](#) (with extant LP allocations highlighted in green). Monitoring for 2025/26 undertaken since the preparation of the topic paper (TPC-NLP 5) identifies that extant allocation (MH5) Land at Airfield Business Park is now fully developed, and that construction has lawfully commenced at (L1) Lutterworth East SDA. However, outline consent for extant allocation (MH4) Land at Airfield Farm granted in October 2023 is due to lapse in October 2026.
69. The assessment of the commercial attractiveness of candidate employment sites [EMP-NLP 5 Appendix B](#) identified limited opportunities to bring forward additional employment land in Market Harborough. The findings of the site selection methodology [PRE-NLP 6](#) identified just one small new site capable of

allocation for employment uses in Market Harborough, namely MH5 Land OS 3070, Leicester Road at 0.6 ha.

70. The policy framework under which any development at extant allocation (MH4) Land at Airfield Farm would be considered, once extant consent lapses, would be the strategy set out in Part 1 of the plan 'Directing development to the right places', specifically policy AP01 (Development in Settlements) for development on land in or adjoining settlements, in conjunction with NPPF 2026 National Decision-making Policies (NDMP).

Matter 4, Issue 4, Question 8

Q8. Following on from this, in order for the Plan to be found sound, are there any MMs that should be made, including to the site-specific allocations?

71. In order to be found sound, the Council would be happy to accept a recommendation for a modification based on our response to Question 7, in respect of the extant allocation (MH4) Land at Airfield Farm.

Matter 4, Issue 5: Retail and Main Town Centre Uses

The Council's response

Matter 4, Issue 5, Question 1

Q1. How have the conclusions of the Harborough Town Centres Study [RTL-NLP3] in relation to food/beverage, comparison and convenience retailing, and leisure/ entertainment/ cultural activities informed the policies of the Plan?

72. The conclusions of RTL-NLP 3 on the combined retail and food/beverage floorspace requirement and leisure, entertainment and cultural floorspace need of the district provide the basis for Policy DS02 criterion 10 of the Plan.
73. The study makes expenditure based floorspace projections (Combined retail and food/beverage 11,300sqm, Commercial leisure/cultural 1,500sqm) for these uses. It also assessed premises vacancy and reviewed extant allocations and commitments to identify the residual combined floorspace requirement for retail and food/beverage (2,300sqm) and the potential for leisure (1,500sqm) to 2041. Both are addressed by the site allocations identified in the policy, site specific requirements for these are set out in Policy SA01: MH7 and MH8. Further detail

on the need and approach to retail and leisure is included in section 3.3 of the topic paper [TPC-NLP 5](#).

Matter 4, Issue 5, Question 2

Q2. How has a figure of 11,300 sqm of gross floorspace been derived? Is the wording of criterion 10 of Policy DS02 effective as it requires the delivery of a minimum of 2,300 sqm of gross floorspace for main town centre uses on site allocations?

74. The figure of 11,300sqm of gross floorspace is derived from projections of the capacity for retail (convenience/ comparison) and food/beverage expenditure based on projected population, sourced from Experian, and market shares calculated from the April 2024 household survey conducted as part of [RTL-NLP 3](#). The widely recognised methodology used is set out in Chapter 5 and Appendices 3,4 and 5 of RTL-NLP 3.
75. The wording of Policy DS02 criterion 10 could make a clearer distinction between main town centre uses and the specific requirement for retail and food/beverage floorspace. The allocations are identified to accommodate retail and other main town centre uses. The definition of Main Town Centre Uses includes, but is broader than, retail and food/beverage. Therefore, to remove ambiguity and be clearer, the policy wording could state that site allocations identified in Policy SA01 at Market Harborough are for main town centre uses, of which a minimum of 2,300sqm (gross) floorspace should be for retail and food/beverage use.

Matter 4, Issue 5, Question 3

Q3. How were the boundaries of the relevant centres, including the Primary Shopping Area in Market Harborough, drawn up and what are they based on? What purpose do they serve? Are they all clearly illustrated on the policies map? How does the proposal for a new Local Centre referenced in policy SA02, that requires a Retail Impact Assessment (RIA) as part of the master planning process, relate to both the forecast retail capacity over the Plan period and NPPF paragraph 96?

76. The boundaries of the relevant centres, including the Primary Shopping Area (PSA) in Market Harborough were drawn up following a review, undertaken as part of the Retail and Town Centres Study ([RTL-NLP 3](#)), based on the

boundaries defined in the adopted Local Plan and relevant made Neighbourhood Plans. The purpose of defining clear boundaries for town, district and local centres is to act as a focus for retail, leisure and other main town centre uses, specifically retail in the Primary Shopping Area. The boundaries are important for ensuring the vitality of centres is maintained and enhanced as hubs for the community, through the application of the impact test. The boundaries are also important for directing retail and main town centre uses to appropriate and accessible locations, through the application of the sequential approach to site selection and identifying a viable role and strategy for each centre.

77. The Town, Primary Shopping Area (PSA), District and Local Centre boundaries are clearly illustrated on the Policies Map ([S-NLP 2](#), overview and inset maps), except for the Local Centre at the Land South of Gartree Road SDA allocation (Policy SA01: OA1) which will be defined through the masterplanning and development management process.
78. The Retail Study recommended that the long-term residual need for retail and food/beverage in the district to 2041 could be accommodated by a combination of mixed-use allocations in Market Harborough and / or local shops and services within strategic housing developments of over 400 dwellings. The new Local Centre at LSGR (referenced in Policy SA02) will contribute towards the minimum residual need for retail and food/beverage floorspace to 2041 and is a requirement of Policy SA02 criterion 6(a) as community infrastructure to serve the new development. The Retail Impact Assessment is required as part of the masterplanning process, before the detailed scale and configuration of the Local Centre has been established to ensure that the eventual mix remains proportionate to the needs of the development and does not adversely affect existing centres.
79. A Local Centre, providing retail, other local services and community facilities, at the LSGR SDA is key to the creation of a sustainable community, an important element of promoting a healthy, inclusive and safe community for future residents and provides a focus for place-making, as such it is consistent with the aims of NPPF paragraph 96 and 97.

Matter 4, Issue 5, Question 4

Q4. Is the policy effective and clear how developments are to be determined, depending on where a particular centre sits within the hierarchy i.e. town, district and local centre with regard to scale and impact on vitality and viability? How do the retail and main town centre policies of the Plan relate to higher order retail and main town centres outside the District?

80. Yes. Policy DS02 Criterion 11 is clear in defining the hierarchy and Policy AP02 (Development in Town, District and Local Centres) is clear and effective on how developments for retail, leisure and main town centre uses are to be determined relative to a centre's place in the hierarchy. Criterion 1a) addresses the matter of scale. Criterion 1b) addresses the matter of vitality but does not reference viability. To remove ambiguity and ensure consistency with the NPPF in respect of viability, the Council would be happy to accept a recommendation for a modification on this basis.
81. The retail and main town centre policies of the plan apply to centres within the district. However, the Retail Study acknowledges Harborough district lies within a complex shopping catchment area, and residents have access, to varying degrees, to higher order retail and leisure / cultural facilities with Leicester, Corby, Kettering, Northampton and Rugby influencing shopping patterns. It also confirms that Market Harborough is the only centre in the district with a district-wide catchment and a primary catchment area extending beyond the district.
82. The Retail Study ([RTL-NLP 3](#)) takes account of the relationship between centres within and outside the district, by using a study area zone. The study area is sub-divided into 6 zones based on ward boundaries to reflect the primary catchment areas of the main centres in the district (RTL-NLP 3, Appendix 1) verified via the Household Survey. These relationships, result in goods market shares by zone (%), and are factored into retail expenditure projections and forecast of floorspace required to 2041.

Matter 4, Issue 5, Question 5

Q5. The study [RTL-NLP3] references the potential for new local shops and services to be located within housing sites of over 400 dwellings. How do the policies of the Plan facilitate this?

83. Policy SA02 criterion 4c) and criterion 6a) of the Plan facilitate the delivery of a new Local Centre at the Land South of Gartree Road SDA by making it a policy

requirement for the development. Policy SA03 criterion 2 similarly facilitates the delivery of a neighbourhood centre, including retail, at the cluster of sites to the North of Market Harborough.

84. The plan includes several other housing sites over 400 dwellings (Policy SA01 S1/ BA1/ K1) where new retail facilities are not a policy requirement, these sites are in locations where additional housing can be served by and support the vitality and viability of retail facilities in established centres, either within or outside the district.

Matter 4, Issue 5, Question 6

Q6. Is criterion 1b) of policy AP02 consistent with NPPF, with reference to the impact of main town uses on character and historic distinctiveness, as set out in NPPF paragraph 196? Is such a test relevant to this policy? What is meant by the 'setting of the street scene' in criterion 2b)? Is it expected that both elements of criterion 2c) of AP02 are satisfied, and if so, is this reasonable? What is the rationale behind criterion 2d)? Is this consistent with NPPF paragraph 16d)? Is criterion 3a) effective, in relation to the RIA threshold required throughout the District? If so, what is the justification for this threshold?

85. Policy AP02 criterion 1b) refers to 'preserve or enhance' local character and distinctiveness whereas NPPF paragraph 196 states the strategy should take into account the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. Criterion 1b) satisfies the statutory duties, under primarily legislation, to preserve and enhance. Although such a test is not strictly relevant to include in this policy, as proposals would be assessed under Policy DM03, criterion 1b provides a marker for development in centres to have regard to the historic environment.
86. The reference to setting in criterion 2b) is meant to relate to buildings, rather than the street scene. The clarity of the policy could be improved by re-ordering the wording to read '...is in line with the design of the building, its setting and the street scene;'.
87. Both elements of criterion 2c) would be expected to be satisfied, where a development proposal involves the ground floor and other parts of a building within the PSA. Satisfying both elements may not be reasonable or necessary in all cases. To remove any ambiguity the policy could be reworded to require both elements to be satisfied only where the context requires.
88. The rationale behind criterion 2d is that any consent for a non-retail use should not result in negative amenity or environmental impacts for adjacent users or

the area, for example in respect of noise, odours or surveillance. The criterion is written positively to conform with NPPF paragraph 16. However, that it is adverse impacts, on the amenity or environment of adjacent uses or the area, that should be avoided, rather than positive benefits being mandatory, could be clearer. To remove any ambiguity and ensure consistency the Council would be happy to accept a recommendation for a modification on this basis.

89. Criterion 3a) is effective in relation to the RIA threshold which is set at a consistent 500sqm (gross) districtwide, except in centres where a Neighbourhood Plan defines a lower threshold. However, the wording of the policy could be clearer to make this distinction and remove ambiguity that an RIA is only required for development (retail and leisure) outside defined centres and for retail development in Market Harborough outside the Primary Shopping Area (PSA) to accord with NPPF para 94. On this basis the Council would be happy to accept a recommendation for a modification.
90. As set out in [TPC-NLP 5](#) (para 3.3.21) and [RTL-NLP 3](#) (para 8.18-8.21) a threshold lower than the default figure set out in NPPF paragraph 94 is justified for Harborough to protect the vitality and viability of centres across the district. The threshold was reviewed as part of the Retail Study (RTL-NLP 3), considering PPG guidance on setting locally appropriate thresholds and is considered justified. The consistent threshold of 500sqm (gross) reflects the scale of the district's centres, the low floorspace projections for the district, the pipeline of commitments and proposals and uncertainties about the post cost-of-living crisis recovery which suggest Harborough's centres are now more vulnerable to out-of-town developments.

Matter 4, Issue 5, Question 7

Q7. Policies MH7: St Marys Road and MH8: Commons Car Park relate to existing allocations within Market Harborough. There appears to be a mismatch between the 'required uses' stated in policy MH7 and the detailed policy requirements. Which one is correct? On the basis that this site is in multiple ownership and predominantly occupied, is the aspiration that it be comprehensively developed over the Plan period realistic? Would small scale redevelopment consistent with the allocated uses be acceptable within the confines of the policy?

91. As noted, in the Policy SA01: Site Allocation Schedule there is a mismatch between the uses stated for MH7 (St Mary's Road) in the 'Required Use' column and points 1 and 2 in the Policy Requirements column, and there is inconsistency with Policy DS02 criterion 10 in respect of use. The correct required use is 'Retail and other Main Town Centre uses' which would achieve

consistency with DS02. On this basis, it is considered that Policy SA01/MH7 policy requirements 1 and 2 need to be more clearly worded. To remove any ambiguity and ensure consistency in respect of uses, the Council recommends a new proposed modification to Policy SA01/MH7.

Policy SA01/MH7 (Schedule)

Amend policy requirement 1 and 2 into a single requirement:

1. Site is allocated for ~~leisure, entertainment, tourism,~~ **a retail-led** uses
 2. ~~Development should provide a mixed-use scheme of a least 3,000sqm (gross) including some or all of the following uses: E(b) restaurants, bars, C1 hotel, and E(d) health and fitness.~~
92. The site is in multiple ownership, with freehold and leasehold elements, redevelopment complex but not unrealistic. The Retail Study ([RTL-NLP 3](#), Appendix 7) appraised potential allocations and assessed the development potential of MH7 as reasonable. Market Harborough's town centre is compact with a historic core, the availability of developable sites to accommodate additional floorspace for retail and main town centres uses is limited. MH7 is located within the town centre boundary, c.100m to the west of the PSA, with good pedestrian links to the High Street. Allocating the site in the Plan sets out a positive vision for its future, provides certainty for landowners and gives a basis for site assembly.
93. The aspiration is for the site to be comprehensively re-developed, but small-scale redevelopment consistent with the allocated uses would be acceptable within the confines of the policy. Without allocation, bringing forward the redevelopment of the site, in full or part, within the plan period is less likely.

Matter 4, Issue 5, Question 8

Q8. Similarly, in policy MH8 is the proposed use retail or a mixed-use development? If so, what is the mixture of uses which are considered to be acceptable and does the 1,000 sqm figure relate to retail only or other uses? Is the boundary of the allocation consistent with the evidence? The policy requires that there is no net loss of car parking following redevelopment, including through providing alternative provision elsewhere. How would this be achieved in the context of the allocation providing the 'main off-street car park' [RTL-NLP3] in the centre? Is there a realistic proposition that such alternative provision of a commensurate quality and convenience to the town centre can be identified and implemented over the Plan period? If not, does this undermine the allocation and the town centre strategy of the Plan?

94. As noted, in the Policy SA01: Site Allocation Schedule there is a mismatch between the use stated for MH8 (Commons Car Park) in the 'Required Use' column and point 1 of the Policy Requirements, and there is inconsistency with Policy DS02 criterion 10 in respect of use. The correct required use is 'Retail and other Main Town Centre uses' which would achieve consistency with DS02. On this basis, it is considered that SA01/MH8 policy requirement 1 could be more clearly worded. To remove any ambiguity and ensure consistency in respect of uses, the Council recommends a new proposed modification to Policy SA01/MH8.

Policy SA01/MH8 (Schedule)

Amend policy requirement 1:

1. Site is allocated for a **retail-led** mixed-use ~~retail~~ development ~~including a net increase in retail floorspace~~ of at least 1000sqm (gross).
95. The mixture of uses is not prescribed in the policy to enable proposals to be market led. In accordance with the Retail Study ([RTL-NLP 3](#), Appendix7) the 1,000sqm figure relates to the gross additional floorspace that could be accommodated, for all uses, on the southwest part of the surface car park. The boundary of allocation MH8 is consistent with the evidence, specifically the Retail Study (RTL-NLP 3) and the Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment ([HSG-NLP 6](#)).
96. Addressing the requirement for no net loss of parking following re-development, would be a matter for an applicant, in principle this could be achieved through multi-storey or alternative provision on or off site. The Commons car park is one of 14 off-street public car parks in and around Market Harborough town centre, providing c.1400 spaces. Additional on-street parking is also available on streets within the central area. The largest car park is located at Springfield

Retail Park (incl. Sainsbury's), the Commons Car Park is the second largest, in terms of number of spaces.

97. As identified in RTL-NLP 3 development of MH8 would likely relate to the south western part of the surface car park, resulting in the loss of some parking (c.80 spaces), a relatively small proportion compared to the total number of public spaces at the Commons and wider parking provision serving the town centre. Through policy requirement 4, and the development management process, the aim is to minimise any loss and encourage alternative provision of commensurate size and quality. Given the relatively limited loss, not securing alternative parking, would not undermine the allocation or town centre strategy. Sites to accommodate additional floorspace for retail and main town centres uses within or on the edge of Market Harborough, to support its long-term vitality and viability, are limited. The strategy to focus development within and close to the town centre, including MH8, supports the town's role as a focus for the community and as a hub for public and active travel.

Matter 4, Issue 5, Question 9

Q9. For both allocations are there any heritage or flood risk matters which have not been adequately considered as part of the policy?

98. No. Heritage and flood risk matters have been considered as part of the site selection process (PRE-NLP 5). Flood risk was considered through the Strategic Housing Land and Economic Land Availability Assessment [[HSG-NLP 4](#)], Site Selection Methodology [[PRE-NLP 5](#)], Sustainability Appraisal [[S-NLP 3](#)], and the Sequential and Exception Test [[EN-NLP 9](#)]. A main modification (MM12.8) is proposed in respect of MH8 to respond to the representation by the Environment Agency. Both allocations are assessed in the Addendum to Heritage Analysis of Local Plan Sites (HFC-NLP 2, Feb 2026).
99. The Council considers that heritage and flood risk matters have been fully taken into account in allocating the sites and that the policy requirements provide an appropriate and effective framework for ensuring that development can be delivered safely and in accordance with national policy.

Matter 4, Issue 5, Question 10

Q10. Following on from this, in order for the Plan to be found sound, are there any MMs that should be made, including to the site-specific allocations?

100. Yes. As set out in the responses to question 7 and 8 new modifications are proposed to SA01/MH7 and SA01/MH8.